

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Elizabeth Kline and I am from Manchester. I am also part of Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community (USIC).

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

I had the privilege of feeling safe, healthy, and cared for over the course of my entire childhood. This stability enabled me to enjoy learning, grow up and go to college, and earn my PhD in neuroscience. I am now extremely proud to be a faculty member in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology at the University of Connecticut. My work as a researcher and teacher has been facilitated by the foundation of safety and health I had throughout my formative years. I firmly believe that all humans deserve access to the same chance to develop free from fear. Healthcare should not be doled out to only some. We should be spending our collective resources on giving that experience to as many people as possible. The need for healthcare does not end at age 8. There is, in my mind, absolutely nothing that makes an adult less worthy of care than a newborn. I want Connecticut to take this step of expanding HUSKY access to children 9 and older, with the ultimate goal to be coverage for all of my neighbors who have immigrated here, regardless of status.

Expansion of access to HUSKY beyond age 18 would directly affect me via my teaching at UConn. Distance learning prior to the availability of COVID vaccines kept my students from hands-on laboratory courses. Lab experiences reinforce my teaching and get my students excited about STEM careers. I want in-person learning to continue without risking my students' safety or excluding my immunocompromised students. That necessitates widespread COVID recovery, which requires healthcare for all, regardless of immigration status. COVID will not be the last pandemic, and I want Connecticut to be prepared to respond in the future, ready to meet the needs of anyone seeking infection protection or treatment.

I am asking you to support S.B. 284. Pass this legislation. Take us toward a future where all immigrants can thrive in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration,

Elizabeth Kline